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ENG 2009G-004: Studies in Passion: Literature of Love, Hate, and Obsession

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ENGLISH 2009G (#004)
 Fall 2002
 TR 3:30-4:45 Coleman 3691

Dr. Chris Wixson
 Coleman 3015
 Office Hrs: 8-9:30 AM
 (or by appointment)

Studies in Passion: Literature of Love, Hate, and Obsession

[The study of literature can provide us with] a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us.
 -Adrienne Rich

This course will examine texts that negotiate and explore the complex, contradictory realm of human desire. We will consider how understandings of meaning, ourselves, our wants, and others are bisected by cultural notions of gender, sexuality, race, politics, identity, technology, aesthetics, and notions of history. Toward that end, the course will explore tropes of “love” “hatred” and “obsession” in prose, dramatic, and cinematic works as they reflect anxieties about cultural politics (race, class, gender), epistemology (our ability to understand or represent the world), and ontology (our theories about what the world consists of, who created it, whether it has any meaning, etc.).

The syllabus is made up of texts that span genres and time periods, and, among the authors, you may recognize some of the usual suspects (William Shakespeare, Scott Fitzgerald, Mary Shelley) side by side with less familiar names (Jeanette Winterson, Patrick Marber). Although not conceptualized as a survey, the course is reading and thinking intensive, necessitating a commitment to class discussion (beyond merely showing up) and courageous consideration of ideas about art, interpretation, culture, existence, and desire. The format of each class will be relatively fluid, changing with regard to the material, my ideas, and your interests. There will be some discussion as well as the occasional informal lecture. However, this course should focus primarily on you, your questions, and opinions. Remember this is not MY class but ours and should be understood as an ongoing conversation. The learning outcomes for the course are as follows:

1. To provide strategies for reading, viewing, and appreciating works of art for the insight they provide about history and our own time.
2. To allow each member of the class to engage the significant issues and questions raised by the texts through writing, performance, and class discussion.
3. To assist in the development of skills of critical thinking and argumentative writing.

Due to its class size, we will run the course as a seminar. As such, energetic commitment and engaged participation are crucial to its success and required of *every* member. As it is a *writing-intensive* course, you may elect to submit essay from it to your university-required portfolio.

Assignments:

*Two critical papers (4 pages) that focus on a particular issue that has provoked, challenged, or disturbed your thinking during the course and can be generated from seed papers. Writing guidelines will be handed out in advance.

*Manifesto paper (4 pages)----details to come.

*Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion --- defined as TALKING productively.

*Two short pieces of writing (2-3 pages) called “seed papers” in which you pose a productive question which relates to the inquiry issues of the course about the text and then attempt to answer it. You may be asked to present and stimulate class discussion with your question during the semester. *No* late seed papers will be accepted.

*Final Exam

**During the final week of classes, you will be assigned to a smaller group who will take part of the final exam together. That time will be used for group meetings as you review and prepare for the in-class portion of the exam.

Other sundry ground rules:

Attendance

Your regular attendance is expected; be advised that exams and paper topics will draw heavily from material discussed in class. ~~More than three unexcused absences will result in your term grade being lowered by a third for each session missed beyond three. Since coming late or leaving early is extremely disruptive, habitual lateness will also negatively affect your term grade.~~ Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Do **not** get in touch asking “for the assignment” or a “rundown of what you missed.” My responsibilities as an instructor lie with the students who do come to class.

**If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Class Participation

You should come to class having completed and prepared to talk about the reading for that day. Your own questions and comments about the plays are integral to the success of the course. If you have not done the reading or are not prepared to discuss, it is better not to come to class.

Email

You should get into the habit of checking your email daily. There will be a class list on which I will post changes in assignments (if they arise), course-related announcements, and ideas which expand upon what happens in class. This list is also a great way for all of us to interact outside of class; that is to say, if you have a question or query, the miracle of technology offers us a way to discuss and address it.

Lateness

Since coming late or leaving early is extremely disruptive, I request that you do not come to class if you are more than ten minutes late or if you plan to leave early.

Conferences

I am regularly available to meet with you during my scheduled office hours or by appointment. To make an appointment, speak to me after class or contact me via email.

Grading

Critical Papers	40%
Final Exam	15%
Manifesto	10%
Two seed papers	10%
Participation	25%

Plagiarism

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author--that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the dean.

Class Participation

You should come to class prepared to talk about the reading for that day. Each class session will be a mixture of informal lecture and discussion; thus, your own questions and comments about the plays are essential to the success of the course. You will also need to have completed the assigned reading and (when noted) your typed "seed paper." If there are no questions or a lagging discussion, I will assume that you understand the text perfectly and will give a **quiz** worth as much as a seed essay.

****For extra credit, you may choose to "review" the fall production of Shakespeare's Othello at the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana. If there is enough interest, we can go to the performance as a group. Specific details will be provided as we get closer to the show dates.**

Texts: William Shakespeare Othello
Patrick Marber Closer
Mary Shelley Frankenstein
Jeanette Winterson The Passion
F. Scott Fitzgerald The Great Gatsby
Sam Shepard Fool for Love
Euripides Hippolytus

Schedule of Reading and Writing Assignments

August	27	Course Introduction
	29	Krutch and Winterson handout

September	3	Shakespeare's <u>Othello</u> Act One Seed #1 Due
	5	<u>Othello</u> Acts Two and Three Seed #2 Due
	10	<u>Othello</u> Act Four Seed #3 Due
	12	<u>Othello</u> Act Five Seed #4 Due
	17	Winterson's <u>The Passion</u> Seed #5 Due
	19	<u>The Passion</u> Seed #6 Due
	24	<u>The Passion</u> Seed #7 Due
	26	Marber's <u>Closer</u> Seed #8 Due
October	1	Marber's <u>Closer</u> Seed #9 Due
	3	Essay #1 Due / <u>Closer</u>
	8	Fitzgerald's <u>The Great Gatsby</u> Seed #10 Due
	10	<u>Gatsby</u> Seed #11 Due
	15	<u>Gatsby</u> Seed #12 Due
	17	<u>Gatsby</u> / Shelley's <u>Frankenstein</u> opening
	22	<u>Frankenstein</u> Seed #13 Due
	24	<u>Frankenstein</u> Seed #14 Due
November	29	<u>Frankenstein</u> Seed #15 Due
	31	Essay #2 Due / "Sex and the City"
	5	"Sex and the City" Seed #16 Due
	7	View Film TBA
	12	Film Discussion TBA
	14	Euripides' <u>Hippolytus</u> Seed #17 Due
	19	<u>Hippolytus</u> Seed #18 Due
	21	<u>Hippolytus</u> Manifesto Due

THANKSGIVING BREAK

December	3	Shepard's <u>Fool for Love</u> Seed #19
	5	<u>Fool for Love</u> Seed #20 Due
	10	Group Meetings
	12	Group Meetings
		Exam Review

FINAL EXAM: TBA